Subject: Cleaning coins

Meader, Robert W.

[Middlebury, VT]

1929

ROBERT W. MEADER
LOCK BOX 732
MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT

January 9, 1929.

The American Numismatic Society,
Broadway at 156th Street,
New York City.

Gentlemen:

I have a small personal collection of ancient and modern coins, and the College has a similar cent paper me. In both of them we have some very dirty coins - modern as well as ancient - which we desire to clean as well as possible. After thoroughly washing them with soap and water and a fine brush, much verdure is still left. One hesitates to use even a high-grade silver polish on any of them, particularly the old ones, and I had wondered about cleaning them electrolytically - boiling them (or heating them at any rate) in aluminum with soda and salt. I cannot see how possibly that could injure the invaluable inscription or the metal in any way, and surely that is the most efficient way

of cleaning plate and sterling silver.

And after they are cleaned, what is the best method of protecting them from being again tarnished? Some sort of thin, dull varnish, a lacquer, or some other preservative coating? If you can help me in any way on these problems, you will be doing me a very great favor.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Meade.

11th January, 1929

Mr. Robert W. Meader,
Middlebury, Vermont

Dear Sir:

One can often get off dirt, grease, certain kinds of corrosion, tarnish, etc., with ammonia and water. We at times have used the electrolytic method with the aluminium plate and, with more difficult cases, have even used the lemon juice, salt, and some iron tacks. There are other methods of using acid, but we advise these only in the hands of an expert. A great deal of dirt or caked mud can be dug out of the coin, both before and after treatment, with a thorn or sharp-pointed stick.

For preserving the coins afterwards, we do not advise a laquer unless it is especially made very thin. With copper coins, we often give them a rub with a little beeswax applied on a stiff brush. The thinnest possible coating is all that is necessary. Mutton fat smeared lightly on the finger and then applied to the coin, especially silver coins, is not a bad preservative.

Very truly yours,

Curator